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ABSTRACT

Following a discussion of trends in our society which relate very closely to family, marriage, and sexual behavior, this paper then discusses the responsibilities that parents and teachers have toward children and youth. Included in things that children should be helped to learn are a sense of high self-regard which can be extended to high regard for others, communication skills, a sense of community, how to make decisions, how to be flexible, and how to maintain his own integrity. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (DB)

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And there is the humanist who says, "Stop, we already have more than enough of what we need to make a better world if we use it right; but to use it right we've got to change people — we must provide the vision."

The married couples I worked with viewed their marriage and friendship as a partnership. Each one had previously had — because although neither one could control the other one's way of thinking and feeling, they learned to work together, and to help each other in doing "this thing" and permitting the other to have the freedom to do his. A compromise — if that is a compromise — of that kind takes a lot of hard work and demands a sense of personal identity and character strength that permits flexibility. It also demands an ability to care about the other and to want the good life not just for one's self but for others.

I see these same qualities being needed in individuals who are a part of today's society and those who will be participating in the society that follows ours. We can't just "hope" that these qualities will somehow be there — inside people! We have to make sure that they will be. We have to make plans that they will be. Humanity is at a precarious crossroad, and the choices that will be made and the plans that will be put into execution depend largely on the quality of the character of the individuals making those choices and plans. And this character is formed largely in the early years of childhood and within the family setting. This is why the family-life educator's job should be — and very well may be — the most important one in our current society.

Our chief concern, I believe, must be with the future of the human race and man's humaneness. In this period of profound and rapid change, conflict and confusion is acute and it is widespread and is deep within individuals. It is value change, and attitude change, and these are the changes that produce the most severe conflict and confusion within individuals. Value changes are not new — and they have always produced deep concern conflict. From the time of the early prophets, [illegible] to modern times with its industrial revolution,

we have many, many examples. What is new is that because transportation systems and instant communication have bound the world so much more closely in modern times, a very large number of people are faced simultaneously. It's not just the prophet, who disciplines the law givers, or the farmers that are caught in the change - it is all of us and our children.

There is much doubt in our generation about where we are going - where we ought to be going - and how we are going to get there. And where there is doubt, there is confusion, and there is conflict. We see it in conflict between the generations, between the sexes, between the races, between the haves and the have nots, between political ideologies, and even religious philosophies. To come through this period will take a great deal of personal readjustment and social reassessment. It may mean re-routing our personal lives and life goals and our social participation. It may undoubtedly mean reconstruction - and along what lines - we are still unsure.

Most of the time I believe that humanity will survive - and that Man will come through this with greater humanity than he has had before, and that he will build a better society than we have had before. I doubt that a lot of our social institutions will survive as they now exist; - the nuclear family and monogamous marriage, the graded school system, the university structure, the Christian church are among those institutions in which I expect there will be profound changes if, indeed, they survive at all.

The immediate question is: can we ourselves manage our own confusion well enough to maintain or develop a sense of direction in our personal lives. Can we as teachers and parents, get our own values looked at and sorted out well enough to be of any help to the young people who look to us for guidance and leadership. Can we use our own freedom responsibly? Can we become socially active - constructively? Can we establish a philosophy - through reason or faith or both - that gives some meaning to life?

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Even if we might believe it as desirable, I think there is no way to prevent the females from taking on more power and thus changing role both in the home and society. The problem is self-limiting, of course. The economic situation in many women in the world both as well educated and as wage producers is such that ham burgers and pregnant down on the farm. As women's roles change, as we will, of course, we anticipate a change in the roles of men -- and it represents a change in attitude, not only about what women are and what they do, but more importantly what they are themselves and what their responsibilities in this new period are. This kind of re-assessment may be very threatening -- socially and personally. For the man whose self esteem is largely dependent on providing for and protecting a wife, there is a serious loss of self value and a confusion, when his wife goes to work and brings home a bigger check than he does. He may not think what I'm saying in such a case as "fear" but fear it is, and men human beings react to fear either by fighting or fleeing. So I think, we may expect an increase in both male aggression and male deterioration.

If female aggression stimulates male aggression there is bound to be an increase of violence in our culture. If female aggression stimulates abdication, there may be increased apathy which even women's capable and well intended ambitions cannot overcome. Only by learning new ways of working together can the potential which I see as uniquely masculine be combined with that which is uniquely feminine to make the most complete and effective society we have yet had.

Within the family unit the upset of male-female balance of power is likely to be as drastic as it is in the larger society. Women generally are taking the stance that they should have the right to use their bodies as they wish. This extends to the right of abortion on request, the right to enter into sexual relationships outside of marriage. This has the more sweeping effect by implication of weakening the "conjugal rights" of the husband; these are rights which he has long been accorded by law and by church. The same husband who would all but commit suicide if he had to

I do not believe that child rearing practices as we have known them [illegible] are [illegible] involved. I am desperately afraid that even if our generation teaches our children [illegible] they will still have to learn how to be parents of girls and boys. And I believe [illegible] to be men and to be women. Frankly, with the ingenuity that I believe exists in the [illegible] of parenting, I even say with all sincerity, the pill was discovered more [illegible] soon and abortion-on-request laws are coming [illegible] quickly.

We are moving into a period of history where the individual - both male and female - has more socially approved options than have previously existed before. I've assumed that an increased number of options is a good thing, that we are empowering and progressing. Certainly an increased number of options is a creative and a challenge to personal growth. But on the other hand, it may provide such a wilderness of confusion that Man will lose his way entirely. A very minor example of the kinds of options we have now may be in the variety of dress styles that are approved. And even these are unsettling to quite a few of us. Last week a friend of mine was considerably disconcerted because her college-aged daughter had bought her outfit to wear to her cousin's formal wedding, and when she took the costume out of the box it was not the long, sweeping gown the mother had expected but was a pair of red palkadotted hot pants! I was at a funeral not long ago where there were hats and gloves and tuxedos - there were also hymns and Judy Collin's folk songs. As I work with the parents of adolescents one of the most frequent questions they ask about their sons is "How can I get him to cut his hair?"

There are numerous life patterns for women today that were not acceptable a generation ago - or for that matter not so acceptable even today. Women can choose to be unmarried, for example. Marriage no longer has to have top priority and the [illegible] no longer has to be considered as "permanent". Women have the opportunity

combine career and family -- and are not "looked down upon for being out of the home". By the virtue of these changes, men, too, have more options. They do not have to be the sole support of the family; they, too, can care for the baby and do the cooking if they enjoy these activities.

Within the family itself there is a growing number of alternate life styles. Many of our young people are living in communes; many are engaging in group sex; many unmarried women who are mothers are electing to raise their children without the benefit of a father. There is an increase in both premarital sexual activity and extramarital -- the increase is primarily on the part of women who have always had sexual relations outside of marriage. Middle-aged people -- even respectable ones -- and professional ones -- are engaging in multiple sexual activities under the term of "swinging". It is obvious that attitudes toward sex and sexual behavior are changing. There is no longer (if there ever was!) a single sex ethic!

Connected with these changes are a multitude of others that are so closely associated that it is not possible to determine which came first, the chicken or the egg. Women's insistence that she be seen as a person and not a sex object, tends to de-glamourize the sexual; she no longer has to be a dress horse to attract men -- a part of this de-glamourization, amusingly enough -- is the bra-less fad! Eventually, however, I think the effect of the emphasis of female individuality will be on her brains, personality, and skill rather than on breasts, pelvis and legs. Attitudes toward nudity are changing -- acceptance of the human body is more casual. College itself is a less significant act. It is not only fiances and marriage partners who sleep together but good friends and strangers who want to go for a roll in the hay. Even a lack of coitus is less significant today than in the last generation. It is not uncommon for college boys and girls to go on weekends together, to sleep together in the same bed in a motel and to decide not to have intercourse. Interestingly, enough in a recent study done at Cornell it was discovered that fathers of girls engaged in this kind of relationship were usually estranged. He was first

helping our young realize the scope of world poverty, ignorance, natural and man-made disasters, and the threat of over-population. It means helping them to recognize and become a responsible non-participant in environmental pollution. It means helping them understand the complexity of marriage and the marital relationship, the demands of parenthood and an assessment of their own ability to be a successful marriage partner and a parent. It means helping them face their adolescent problems as they exist for these kids now, and it means helping kids assess their abilities and their limits and to "gather themselves up and know where they are at". A recent study indicates that more than 50 percent of girls under age 18 who marry are pregnant. We know that our teen-aged V.D. and illegitimacy rates are increasing. Most of these kids don't really want an illegitimate child or V.D. or to get married and start raising kids, and most of them know they have neither the ability nor the stamina to accept the responsibility of doing it, yet our generation fails in a means to help them. I believe our failure is primarily in dealing honestly with sex and in developing responsible attitudes at an early age in all the phases (not just sexual) of living.

A tremendous number of highschool and even junior high and elementary school youngsters are experimenting with drugs; many are addicted in their early teens, many are spending precious hours of adolescent growth time either freaked out or stoned. I have no solution; as a matter of fact, I have little understanding of our youth drug culture. I know that most of the kids that I know that are on the drug scene are high ability kids who found that school lacks challenge and relevance and that they were in a society where their adolescent abilities didn't count for much - they couldn't be employed; many times they couldn't even give their skills and ideas away. Their society doesn't know what to do for them except to use them for grocery-bagging boys, paper boys, movie ushers, baby sitters, and grass mowers. Most of the kids that I know that smoke pot are bored - and they're scared. They're scared of a self-destructing society that makes machines to control people rather [illegible] they're scared of the war, bureaucracy, and [illegible]